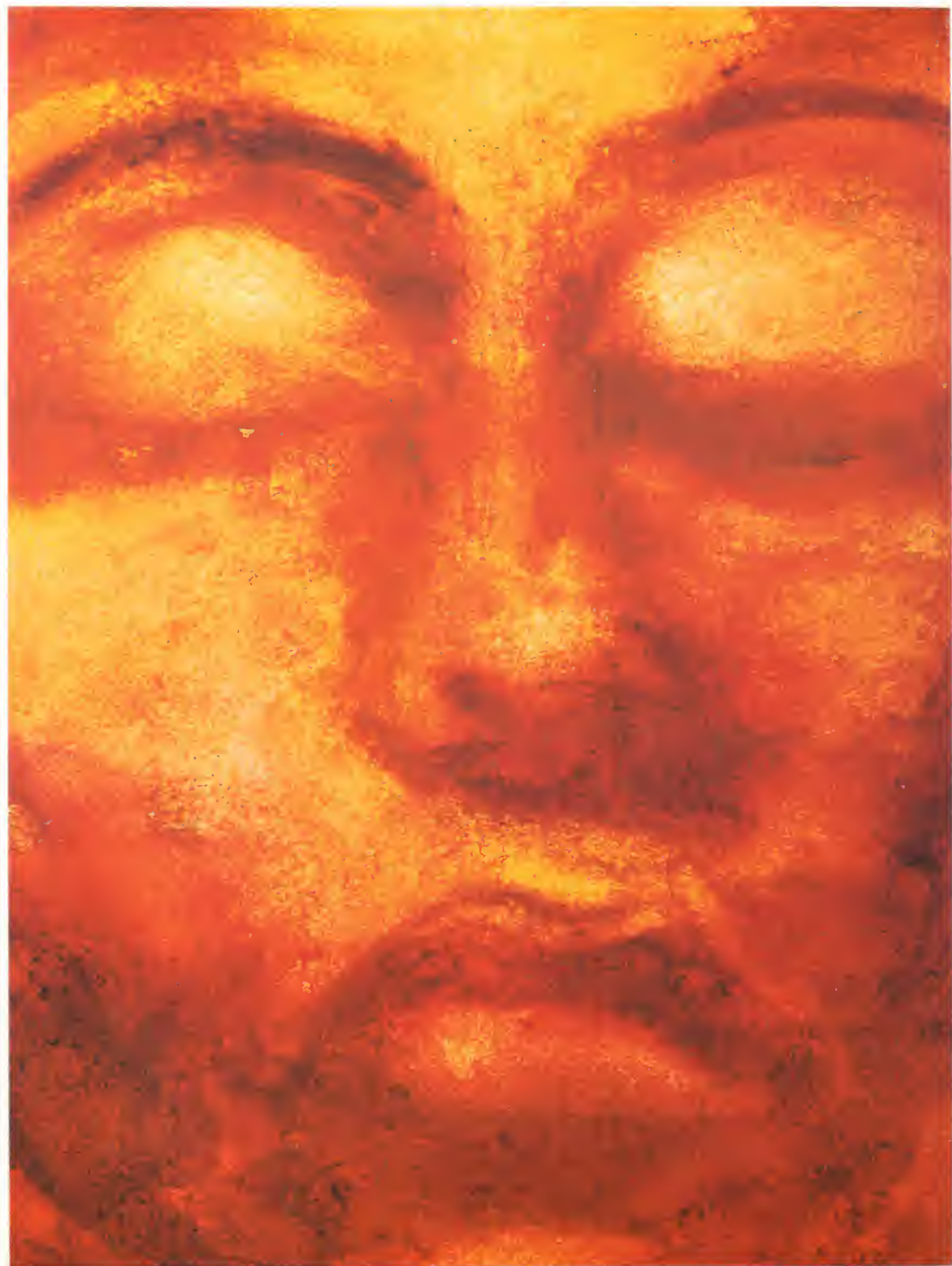




Let's go
Paul Davis

Spring
1999



The Register

Spring, 1999

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The Register is published twice a year by the students of Boston Latin School. Students in Classes I through VI are invited to submit original writing and artwork. Pieces are selected by the Editorial Board of *The Register* on the basis of quality, not name recognition; the writers of all pieces remain anonymous to the Editorial Board during the selection process to ensure that all classes are fairly represented and no one is given an unfair advantage.

The Register

Spring 1999

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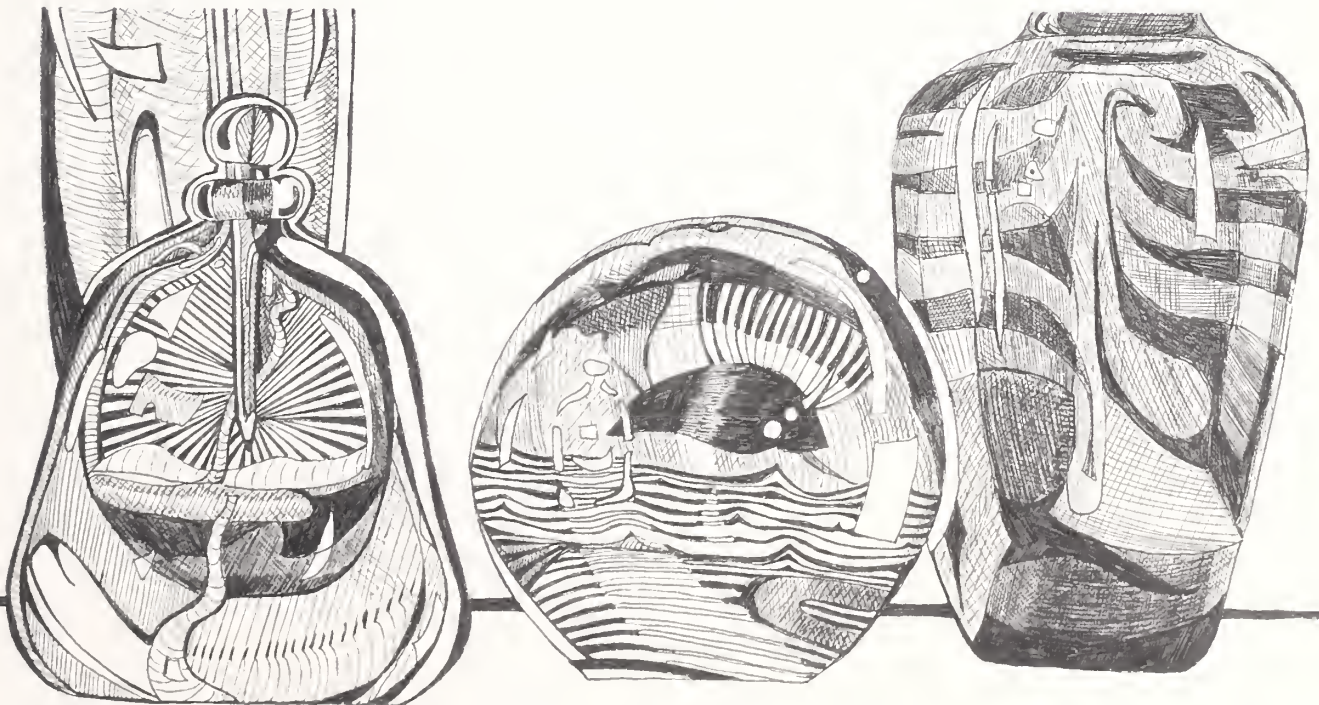
winkflash heartjump

first impressions count.

radiant beauty lives on in memory
 (while reality fades).
god, i think, she's gorgeous.
 (and for the moment, she is).
a smile, delight in acquaintance
with (me!) her.

a (tantalizing) lash-laden
 winkflash heartjump.
first impressions
 fade.

-William Young, I



A Kind of An Experiment

I once lived off of nothing except M&M's and Mott's Apple Juice for a week. It was kind of an experiment. I don't know. It was something I had pondered all fourth grade. I actually attempted this little venture back then, but my mother took me for being depressed and sent me to see a psychiatrist. So, there I was. Three years later. Now thirteen trying to accomplish the only dream I had left: to live off of my favorite candy and juice for a week straight. I did it. It certainly had its moments. Only problem I had was doing it on the week of my uncle's wedding anniversary. My whole family went out to dinner. Some big fancy restaurant called Portsies. I begged to stay home, but my parents wouldn't have it. So, I did the only thing I could do; I brought my M&M's and Apple Juice with me. Everyone sat around with their champagne and expensive food. And in the midst of it all sat me. Me and my bowl full of little colored circles. No one else was eating with his fingers, and I began to feel left out. I poured my juice into the bowl and watched the M's swim around. I took my spoon and—Well, my mother grabbed that spoon faster than you have ever seen a human being move. She screamed out, just loud enough for everyone to hear, "Are you insane?" I saw a waiter out of the corner of my eye. He was a tall, handsome guy about twenty-five. He just stared. His name was Jim, if I remember the name-tag correctly. The whole place went up in silence. Now, if you've ever witnessed thirty-five complete strangers share a moment like that, I'd like to hear about it. People were now peering over at my dinner. "Neglected?" I heard some lady say. I looked at my family who just sat in horror. My mother's eyes went black. I glanced over at Jim again. He looked like an angel. I wanted him to rip my mother's

hand off of me and take me away. I thought of yelling to him. But I didn't. Instead I turned red. I mean bright, bright red. A few of my candies had fallen to the floor. With that, my mother abruptly stood up with a huff, and said, "This whole thing is ridiculous. You're insane. We're leaving now." She literally threw me into my coat. My father didn't know what to say. This was his brother's anniversary party. "Uh, honey, I'm just gonna stay here with Bill and everyone. Is that ok?" he whispered, fearing her answer. She narrowed her eyes, "Harold, I have never been so embarrassed." As we walked out I took one of my M&M's. I threw it at the lady who had said "Neglected?" when she wasn't looking. As my mother searched through her bag for the keys, I stood staring at my shoes. That's when I heard it. The greatest voice I've ever heard. I'm talking *ever*. It was kind of raspy, but in a good way. Not too deep, but not too high. "Excuse me, miss. . .you dropped this." Miss? It took a few seconds to realize the shadow over me. I looked up. Blue eyes. That's all I saw. It was him. My waiter. I could hear my shaky little voice say, "Thank you," as he handed me my baseball card. The one that my brother had given to me before he left us. Before he left me. To go to college somewhere in Europe. It was a Cal Ripkin Rookie Card. I treasured it. But I wasn't thinking of how I almost lost my memory back there. I was thinking about Jim's cheeks. The way they got really red when he smiled. And walked away. I felt a tug from my mother. Taking me back to reality. When we got to the door I looked back one more time. Jim was looking. I mouthed to him, "Thanks again" and walked out. I think I felt him smiling as I left. Yeah, I definitely did.

-Anonymous



The First One To Laugh

She is old.
The kind of aged
Where her wrinkles don't become her
And she would be the first
One to put on
Brand new
White
Tennis shoes, complete with the
"Nike" sign in bold RED
Down each side. . .
I will not be tactful,
Because elderly is a good adjective.
But she is not worn out.
She is tall and blithe
As she steps up the stairs of the T car.
Energy radiates from her girl-scout-leader
Smile.
And I almost expect to see a
Shiny metal whistle
Hanging around her neck—
The source of her robust pride.
I said she was old;
Over sixty-five, probably.
Of retirement age.
But still, her gray curls don't become her.
And she would be the first one to
Laugh.

-Kirstin Goodrich, II



Summer House

It is the one place where time stands still, the same today as it was ten years ago. She opens the door, and is aware of the musty smell floating out from all corners of the rooms. It comes from being shut up all winter, and it reminds her of her grandparents. Down the stairs, and to the left, she enters the basement playroom where she and her brother and cousins had spent countless hours entertaining themselves. The same old Playskool and Fisher Price toys that she used to love still line the walls. She looks up and sees that the safe above the fireplace that she always used to try to break into (it was empty) is also still there. She spies Nana and Pop's seashell collection and is immediately drawn to the crumbly starfish and the roaring conch shell that always used to mystify her. It still does.

Outside again. The house has undergone a few changes in the last couple of years: a new paint job (from yellow to white), a new garage door (it goes up and down all by itself!) and a new mailbox (someone drove into the old one), but for the most part everything is the same. She follows the familiar concrete path into the backyard, and when it ends her feet are assaulted by the dry prickly yellow grass. The outdoor shower is still there with its rusty

lock and slimy flagstone floor. She remembers that when she used to bathe in it after a long day at the beach, she was always afraid of bugs crawling onto her feet. Now she shudders, just thinking about it.

Up the steps to the deck where the hornet nest used to be (Dad exterminated it long ago) and inside again through the sliding screen door, where on rainy days she and her brother had played numerous card games. Sounds of "crazy eight!" and "go fish!" echo from the walls.

The whole house is full of memories of her family and the person she used to be. It has not changed, but she has. Now she would much rather watch TV or read a book than make up plays and perform them in the basement the way she used to. On rainy days she would much rather go shopping at the mall than stay home and play cards—no more "thirty-one" or "spit" for her. She is all grown up, she reminds herself, and must act her age. The house beckons to her, though, and is slowly turning her into the little girl she used to be. Suddenly she hears a familiar sound of music from the street. Impulsively she runs outside to catch the ice-cream truck on this warm summer night. As she leaves the house the front door sighs behind her, and inside all is still once more.

-Kate Chevarley, II





Rope Swings for Escaping Anxiety, Fear and Ice Cream Cones

When I was in fifth grade, my mother contracted an auto-immune disease. I did not immediately know this. All I knew was that suddenly I came home after school and my normally hardworking mother was sleeping on the couch. She spent hours making hushed, worrisome phone calls to her friends and, I assumed, doctors. My best guess was breast cancer, judging from the position of the heat packs she was using, but breast cancer was as good a guess as measles, because no one bothered to tell me a thing. Finally, two weeks after my mom had been admitted to the hospital and had had an operation, I overheard my father talking on the phone with a friend. An auto-immune disease. Wasn't that like AIDS? Slowly more pieces came: "Only one previous case in the United States. . . No known cause or cure. . . Your mother may have to go to Texas where the other woman had been treated." It was too much for this ten-year-old.

I tried playing with other kids. There were sleepovers every weekend, soccer, piano, and swimming lessons, but the pool reminded me of my mother, who wouldn't be able to swim for a year until her operation healed. My beloved piano teacher didn't have all the answers anymore. Other mothers' homemade macaroni and cheese just wasn't as good as my mother's.

My one solace was a rope swing in my backyard. I spent hours on that swing. The swing carried me away to the sky, far from my father talking on the phone with specialists in New York and Texas, far from my three-year-old brother asking for Mama, far from my nosy classmates. It was frightening, going so high and then racing back down, dangerously close to the ground. After I had swung especially high, the ground seemed to scream at me as I came closer and closer. But at least, thanks to physics, I knew I would squeeze past the treacherous blades of grass and the conspiring ants to go up again on the other side. I would never even brush the ground. Someday, I imagined, I would just keep going up higher and higher, until I could let go and gracefully step onto a cloud. Then no one could bother me.

There was one problem with the rope

swing, though. Eventually, I always had to come down. Coming back to the ground hurt. I tried waiting until the swing had slowed down and was hardly moving. But waiting meant losing all remnants of happiness and comfort or maybe, just maybe, exhilaration, that I had managed to capture in my explorations into the big blue. Jumping down seemed like the only way I could even hope to bring any of that sunshine back to earth with me, even if it did last for only a couple minutes before it shattered to the hard, unforgiving ground. The ground did not bend to accept my weight like the branch on the old tree holding my swing. It was like smashing into a wall, except that with the ground, I couldn't bounce off and recover from the pain. Once I was off that swing, I was stuck, a slave to the ground.

Last year, while confronting her own problems, a friend of mine told her psychologist about my experience in fifth grade. "Emotional detachment is a complex matter. It is not right or wrong. It may feel good for you, but you just have to be careful. When you shut the world out, you may end up losing too much. You don't want to end up worse than you were before," the psychologist said. She was right! A swing only accommodates one person; therefore, I could not bring my best friend along for a laugh, a hug, or a cry. When my sister came into the backyard with two ice cream cones, I couldn't grab my own because of the momentum of the swing. I couldn't write in my journal because I was gripping the rope. Everything that I had once held onto for support was lost; there was nothing to help me understand my feelings on the swing.

So no more rope swings for me. The swing is still in my backyard. Once in a while I lean on the rope, to let the friendly old branch hold my weight for a moment. I never climb on, though. I can't swing up and touch the leaves anymore, but it's okay because I can reach out and hold someone's hand or write in my journal. Sometimes I find myself rolling on the ground with laughter; that's when I know that the rope swing phase should be a once-in-a-lifetime pleasure.

-Ann Fountain, II



A Dream Deferred

I have a dream. An impossible dream, which I know in my heart I will never realize. A dream that surpasses any vision ever conjured up by the most wildly imaginative of minds. A dream that I have come oh-so-close to achieving, time and time again. My dream (oh, dare I even think it, much less say it!) consists of one seemingly simple goal: *to get to class on time!* Or, the ultimate goal, even more unheard of, to get to class *early!* As of now, I have consistently failed in my efforts to reach this goal, a goal that is shared by many other Latin School students. When the bell rings and the classrooms give up their bored and sleepy masses, and the cafeteria lets loose its screaming hordes, and there is a mass exodus that generally displaces to the opposite extreme of the building, then I find myself awash in the great sea of the unlearned who travel the path of enlightenment which leads to the other side of the building. . . And I'm usually going the opposite way. However, I am in no way culpable concerning this misfortune; rather, I place the blame upon the shoulders of the Dawdlers. Dawdlers are those persons who, with malicious intent, arrange themselves in groups or even couples at certain strategic locations in the hallways (preferably the most traveled routes), and covertly contrive all types of plans and maneuvers that will allow them to slow the passage of the Latin School scholars toward their respective classes, resulting in their frequent tardiness. Although the Dawdlers are of one mind in their unified goal to make everyone who has the misfortune of being nearby late to class, there are various offenders who use diverse methods of attaining this goal.

The most popular Dawdler is the gaggle of friends, usually a large group of males or females. These are easily outmaneuvered by a firm nudge or shove, and a loud "Excuse me" or "Excuse you." These move aside easily without too much trouble. They

are usually so engrossed in their loud conversations that they do not notice the occasional oath directed toward them by the already-two-and-a-half-minutes-late student.

At times a member of this plasma-like group will separate and walk on his own with a friend or two. Beware of these, the Blockers. They walk immediately ahead of you, and they move almost at your pace, but a fraction slower, so that you frequently tread their heels. They form a blockade that ingeniously weaves about, preventing you from sidestepping them. Blockers are particularly crafty: they will walk quickly for a moment, causing you to speed up also, and then, just when you think you've made it, they slow down once again, leaving you stepping on the fringes of their super-wide cargo pants.

One particularly annoying species of Dawdler is the "confused" Dawdler. This is the one who wanders about the halls aimlessly, looking at the door numbers occasionally with a vaguely puzzled yet dreamy countenance. This one walks with a slow gait, and tends to suddenly turn around a full 180 degrees, slamming into your face, with the realization that he has been going the wrong way. With nary an apology he will slip by you and continue to wander about with a vague look on his face, mouth hanging open slightly as he masticates his gum, in a manner comparable to that of a lazy cow chewing its cud.

Then there is the solitary Dawdler who seems to be moving at an agreeable pace, but do not be deceived! You will want to walk behind this person because he seems to be the only person going your way who is not holding everyone up. But wait. Just when you think you've beaten the Dawdlers at long last, the Dawdler in front of you rears its ugly head and shows its true colors. It is a "Crasher"! He will make an abrupt halt in front of you and, as we all know that an object in motion does not remain in motion when it crashes into



a suddenly stationary obstacle, you, and all your books and notebooks also come to a halt—on the floor—as the Dawdler initiates a conversation with his also quite stationary friend.

And last but by no means least, there is the Couple. There are scores of these to be found dotting the landscape of the halls in a kind of obstacle course. Couples hold hands to prevent you from passing between them. Couples congregate at lockers or in the middle of stairwells and they allow nothing whatso-

ever to separate them. Couples walk each other to their respective classes and then pause two feet apart (still holding hands) to gaze at each other one last time before one reluctantly surrenders the other's hand.

So these are the obstacles that stand between me and the realization of my dream. And the next time that I'm late to class, I beg of my teachers to bear in mind the supernatural effort it takes to get to class even two minutes late.

-Yesica Iris Mirambeaux, II



Mixed Feelings

Shadowy curse, retreating down
into the depths of my mind, only
to regain its strength and then
arise to taunt me all over again,
brought on by my own doing.

-Matthew Chan, IV



Where I Go

There's a place that I go. No matter how many people try to alter it or influence it, it never changes and that's what makes it my place. This place is not tangible and it can't be seen, but it drastically affects me. It's where I go.

I would feel wrong putting a name to this place because to label it would be to cheapen it. It is a place that I regard as holy, above the realities of my everyday life. It's a place both within and outside myself, an altar at which I pray. This altar is my writing. It is where I go.

I don't want you to think that I regard my writing as a divine influence or something like that. It's like how some people see a carnival: it's the most engrossing fun you'll ever have for about two hours. Any exposure longer than that would make it boring. So it is with my writing. I can only take it for a finite amount of time before it becomes dull and formulaic. The creative impulses take me over and, when I stop, I leave the place I go to.

I sit in front of my computer and shut myself down. Once my fingers are in position over the keys, the Hyde takes over and Jekyll is but a memory. I transform, I transcend, I go. It begins with an almost inaudible clicking as my flowing fingers grace the keys. The words are coming with consistency but not emotion yet. And then, my brain begins with its warnings.

"Don't do this again," he whispers. "I can only take so much of this, you know."

And my fingers come back with their inevitable reply, "Shut up, we're driving." Now the keys are being stroked with more force than before, and the noise is tuned to an audible pitch. The fingers are growing quicker now, moving beyond normal capabilities. The words are coming to the screen with more emphasis, and their meanings are starting to drip with import. The story has taken a life of

its own and is shaping up beyond my control. And my brain starts with the warnings again.

"You're coming dangerously close, are you sure about this?" His voice grows apprehensive and worried but my arms are without remorse. All they know is the pleasure, the inexplicable ecstasy of moving with godlike fluidity over the keys. The words have become fifty-cent now, regulars in a Victor Hugo novel. The screen is being constantly lit up by an unending array of characters and punctuation marks. The once inaudible click is building to a deafening crescendo as my fingers begin to smoke with the extent of their activity. My brain is deafening as well, pounding against the banging of the keys, screaming all the while that madness and incomprehension are just around the corner.

"Don't you understand that this is just a term paper, you fools," he screams at my arms. But of course they pay him no mind. Now the going gets harrowing. My arms start egging my brain on, telling him that all they need is a little more power, just a little, they coo. My brain is trying to resist but my nerves have taken over and give my arms the juice they need to complete their horrific mission. Somewhere beyond this screen, the world is turning, sirens are wailing, trees are twisting in the wind, and people are screaming my name but I am dead to all of it. The only thing I hear is the cacophony of horrible clacking as the keys are striking themselves, my arms useless against the well of emotion bubbling up inside of me. Once again, they beseech the brain just a little more, but still it is determined not to give in. All of a sudden it becomes more than a beg; it's the cry of an animal in pain, praying for release.

My arms have become creatures of light, flying so fast that it seems I have employed ghosts to do my dirty work. My brain

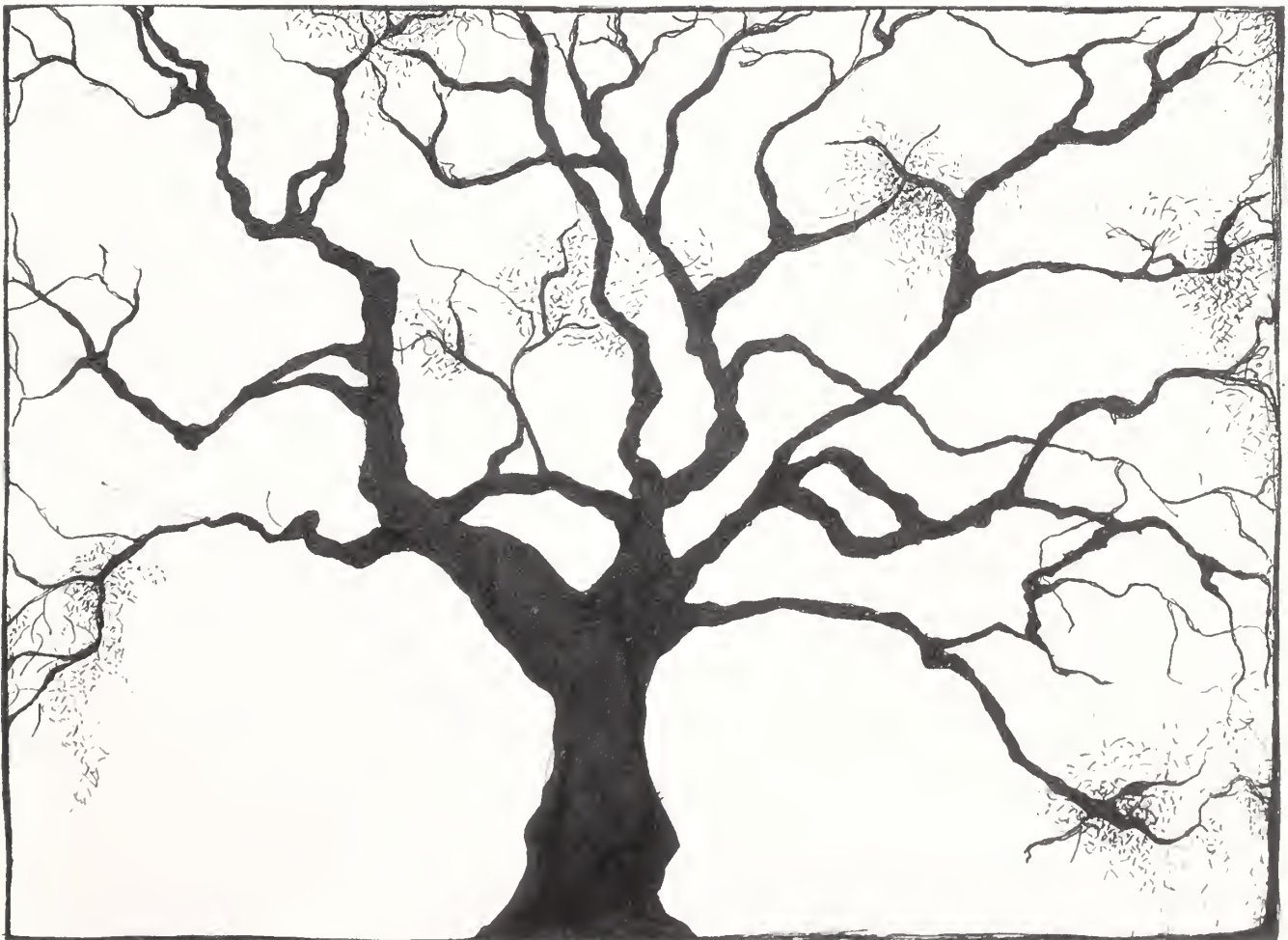


at last succumbs to the torrent of fervor that has leaked its way out of my chest and onto the keyboard in front of me. The crescendo is even more deafening than before. Now my brain is at one with the board and my arms and the glorious piece of work that is taking shape on my beloved canvas. At last, the connection is severed and I am thrust back in my chair, arms ripped from their stations; the keys are smoking.

My mind begins to decompress and look at the royal extravaganza of expression

that has been placed on my computer. I try to make sense of the indecipherable fog and the misspelled words but it is in vain. These words originated in a place with no name. Outside, I hear sirens of passing police cars and the rustling of trees in the wind. My name is called and my head snaps to attention. I am home again, for now. The only remnants of the place that I go are the trembling left in my arms and the smoke from the over-abused keyboard.

-David Esposito, II



Untitled

He told me I drove him crazy. I asked him if that was a good thing or a bad thing and he replied,

"Both."

I didn't know that I had that kind of power over someone. Was it because he was left unsatisfied? Because we'd go so far and I'd abstain? Was it because he was studying the curve of my back with his finger tips under the soft alcove of blankets? Was it because when he asks me what I'm thinking I tell him, "Nothing" or I just close my eyes and shake my head because simple words don't come easy.

The latter carries the most weight. I'm afraid I might render him uninterested. Silence kills affection: It shouldn't but it does. I mean every

word I don't say, that my eyes exude. I have plenty that I want to say but it's all too excruciating to put into words. It seems tedious and impossible: like when I was little, jumping to catch the soap bubbles that used to float above my plastic picnic table on the breeze. Each of them a word, unattainable in speech, but I try to reach them anyway. When I realize that I strain my arms in vain, I turn to find another outlet. I use a silent method to justify my silent manner.

I understand myself. I am no hermit. My feelings are known. Does he understand me?

He told me that I drove him crazy. Is that a good thing or a bad thing? Both.

-Kaitlyn Jolly, III



For Lisa

I hate parties. Disgusting cold food, relatives who obviously want to pinch my cheeks even if they don't do it, and who always tell me how I've grown even though I haven't. I just want to slink into a corner out of the crush—preferably a corner in an empty room—and daydream, and when I can slip out of my mom's line of sight I do just that. Then one day I ducked into the room with all the coats and flopped down, heaving a sigh of relief, and the coats emitted a muffled scream. Turned out Lisa was buried under there, apparently seeking escape even more desperately than I. Having been thrown into this decidedly awkward situation, I opted to make the best of it, and asked the coats their name. An indistinct grunt emerged, and from that day on we were the best of friends. That is, until I moved to California and she died.

But that's jumping the gun a little, or a lot, and I promised myself I wouldn't do that. I hate foreshadowing, especially since it's always ominous. Why doesn't anyone ever foreshadow a happy event, like winning the lottery or getting a job promotion? Of course, a job promotion was what landed me in California in the first place. Gee, it's starting to look like *anything* good is just a tissue-thin silver lining on an enormous dark storm cloud... Cut it, Beth. You promised Dr. Bonnell you'd stop thinking like that, or they'd put you on the Prozac again. Well, no need to add borderline schizophrenia to my already lengthy list of mental problems, talking to myself in the third person like this. God. Don't you wish you could just shut your brain off sometimes? I certainly do, which is probably why I sleep so much. But even sleep isn't any good, because I always dream about Lisa, and she's usually dead, sometimes with maggots in her eyeballs.

But back to living Lisa, Lisa with bright green eyes unclouded by death, certainly uneaten by worms. *That* Lisa squirmed out helplessly from under the coats; only her

sneakered feet were all caught up in Mrs. Connolly's rubbery raincoat, which in turn was weighted down by rich old Miss Simon's voluminous furs. She looked up at me, looking absolutely ridiculous with those imploring eyes that twinkled with mischief still. I met her glance and suddenly started laughing so hard I fell off the bed. I knew it was horribly insulting and improper, but that consideration only made me laugh harder and more raucously. Which set Lisa laughing, only that wasn't a big deal because it was the easiest thing in the world to make Lisa laugh. When I finally, partially got a hold on myself, I helped her out from under her rubber-fur prison, still troubled by uncontrollable spasmodic giggles. I suppose in a way I didn't want to stop laughing, since it was a long time since I'd laughed at anything.

"So," I said finally, wiping tears of mirth from my eyes, "what's your name? It was kind of muffled the first time—all those coats, you know." Giggles started to bubble up again at the thought, but I shoved them down with an effort.

"I'm Lisa Moore. Who're you?"

"Elizabeth Damean—Beth, to everyone who knows me, except to those Stone-Age ladies out there. I'll forever be 'Elizabeth' to them. My next question is what in God's name were you doing under those coats? You scared the hell out of me, you know."

She laughed. God, that laugh of hers, like little golden bells. "*I* scared *you*? Really. Is that so? But in answer to your question, I was hiding from my mom and from those 'Stone-Age' ladies who want to tell me how they remember me when I was six inches high. Plus, I was a little tired." A flicker of something flashed across her face, then was gone almost before I registered it. "But speaking of the lovely old ladies, are you a relative? I've never met you."

I started to say that I'd kill myself if I were related to half the old hags out there, but



I bit it back. For one thing, I didn't think that it would be polite, but for another, I, of all people, know that you don't joke about suicide. "Nope. My mom's friends with Mrs. Connolly, really good friends, so we get invited to all of these things. Too many of them. But how come I've never met you?"

"Oh—we just moved here from Boston." She paused for a moment, then gave a bright laugh. "Well, Elizabeth Damean, what do we do now?"

"Well, I'm sure as hell not going out *there* again—" jerking my head toward the door, outside of which the party lurked. "I've got a feeling you don't want to either. There room in that pile of coats for two?"

She grinned. "Sure. We've got our own little nest here," she said, flinging aside a few coats beside her. "One condition, though. No cheek-pinching, okay?"

"Bet on it." We both laughed again.

I was doing a lot of laughing. It felt good.

And I kept on doing a lot of laughing. *Real* laughing. Oh, sure, I'd done my share of fake laughing over the years—laughing caustically at myself, or making fun of other, happy people because I was jealous. But now I found myself laughing, not out of bitterness, but out of happiness. At first, it was only around Lisa and only when she was laughing. Her laughter was infectious: she'd start giggling over something stupid, and then she'd get me giggling, and then we'd sit there for hours laughing hysterically over absolutely nothing. (I'd always been contemptuous before of girls who used to do that, precisely because I never could do it myself.) But then, gradually, I began to be able to laugh even when I wasn't around Lisa. For the first time, I began to see that certain elements of my depression were pretty comical. For example, there was the time when I was watching Barney with a little kid I was babysitting, and I nearly threw the TV out the window because "that frigging purple dinosaur isn't making any goddamned sense!" Or the time that I burst into tears be-

cause a girl from school—a girl I hated, no less—had walked by me in the hallway without saying "hi."

I never told Lisa about my depression; I figured it would have sounded too ridiculous. How could she possibly understand? She had the perfect life. Two parents, still married and still in love, a six-year-old brother with golden curls all over his head and big blue eyes, a purry cat named Fluffy, for God's sake. I mean, I had two parents, but they fought, and my brother was twenty-three and had lank, greasy brown hair, and I most certainly did not have a cat named Fluffy.

Still, Lisa must've sensed something was wrong—hell, she'd have had to be the biggest fool in the world *not* to sense that something was wrong. So she kept trying to *fix* it. At first, her attempts annoyed me. Yeah, she was my friend, but she was getting way too personal here... It was then that I asked myself, with some surprise, whether I wanted to feel better or not. I realized that, on some level, I'd grown comfortable with my depression. I'd grown to find some sort of satisfaction in self-pity, to cherish perversely that feeling I had, the one in that song my dad sometimes sang: "Nobody likes me, everybody hates me, guess I'll go eat worms!" Because, munching on worms and all that, I was perfectly justified in hating the world back. This realization startled me, but it made me more willing to let Lisa drag me out of my shell.

Her first tries were little things. She'd invite me to the movies, and I hadn't gone to the movies in forever. I'd have preferred to stay strictly at my house or her house, away from the world. Or she'd catch me eyeing someone from school hostilely, and instead of steering me away quickly in the hope of avoiding a confrontation, she'd wave to the person—she was friends with everyone; she could make friends with a cockroach—and strike up a conversation. I was amazed to find that nine times out of ten, the person was perfectly nice and friendly, and not one of them

spit in my face. "For God's sake, would she cut out the friendly-person act?" I muttered after one such encounter with Lydia Sales. Anyone else would have given me a reproachful look and maybe a lecture. Lisa laughed.

From those small things, she moved to less subtle attempts. More and more, she started talking seriously, never explicitly commenting on my depression but hinting at it, trying to persuade me to open up when I so obviously didn't want to. The strange thing was that I didn't really mind. I began to be able to tell her things, things which had been pent up in my system somewhere, things I'd hated myself for, quite frankly. And as I began to be able to talk about them, it seemed that that black poison of hatred was leaking out of my system, little by little. It was nice to have a friend I could talk to like that. It was nice to have a friend, period. I began to realize just how much Lisa meant to me.

And then I found out we were moving to California.

"Your father's gotten a promotion, honey. It's a wonderful opportunity for him, he'll be the head of his branch, and of course there'll be a substantial pay increase. The only catch is, it does require that we move. . . "

I shrieked at them. How could they do this to me? I was getting better, or hadn't they noticed? My psychiatrist was here, my group therapy was here, *Lisa* was here, dammit, and I was finding that friendship—the very thing that I'd shunned for so long—was better medicine than all the drugs and therapy in the world. And now they were going to pull me up, just as I was beginning to put down roots?

They just didn't see things the same way I did, that was all. To them, it was just that the Prozac was working—"I know you're feeling much better, Beth, and I'm so glad, but what does our move have to do with that? Depression's not a geographic thing, it's mostly biological, and you've got the Prozac to help you take care of it now. We'll find a new psychiatrist in California, of course, and

you've never seemed all that attached to Dr. Jackson, anyway. And, hon, I know how close you are to Lisa, and I do feel terrible about that part. But you can always e-mail her, and you'll make new friends, really you will, as long as you don't let yourself get misanthropic again. And, sweetie, you know our family's needed this promotion for awhile. You'll be going to college in a couple of years, and our living costs are so much higher now anyway" (unspoken: BECAUSE OF YOUR DOCTOR'S BILLS) "and there's just nothing I can do. "

So we moved. From Maine to California. Big jump. It was warm there, which was nice. No snow. Sunny. My new school was nice. Most of the people were nice. But, damn it to hell, nothing was special. Lisa had been special.

I kept in touch with her, of course; checking my email was the highlight of my day. Her friendship was as important to me as ever. She and I were already cooking up big plans for my return visit when I got the e-mail. At first I thought it was from Lisa; it was her address. As I read it, though, it was from her mother. Why would Lisa's mom be e-mailing me? Wait. . . Lisa was sick, she said. She was. . . what? Wait a minute, this didn't make sense. . . No, this wasn't real, must be a joke, it, it—calm down, Beth, and read.

The e-mail said she'd been sick for a long time. When she was fourteen she'd been stricken with myocarditis, a disease that made her heart enlarged and flabby. They'd moved to Boston originally so that she could receive treatment at Children's Hospital. She'd gotten a heart transplant a year and a half ago and had done well with it, but the danger of her body's rejecting the foreign organ had remained. And now she was having a rejection episode. She might pull through, or she might not. It was all up in the air, and the only thing we could do was to pray. Lisa wanted her mom to tell me that she was going to beat this thing, and she was sorry if it was hurting me more to hear this now than it would have when we first met. She hadn't wanted to

worry me, she said, since she was sure it wouldn't be a problem and because she didn't want to depress me. There was more, but I couldn't read it. I flew up to my room, not crying yet, still in shock, and flopped onto my bed. That simple action reminded me of the first time Lisa and I had met, and now I was crying and trying to pray at the same time. Long ago I'd decided either there wasn't a God or He was just an incredible sadist. Well, there better be a God now, and He could be as much of a sadist as He wanted to be, but please God, don't let her die, don't let her die, I'll do anything if you don't let her die—

Lisa died. I didn't get an e-mail telling me about that; Lisa's mom called and had a chat with my mom, who in turn told me. I didn't get it. Lisa dead? How could Lisa be dead? Lisa was the most alive person I'd ever met. I was the dead one, I'd always been dead, so obviously God the *incredible* sadist had made a slight mistake. I was supposed to be dead and Lisa was supposed to be alive, so eventually he'd realize his little goof-up and turn back time and make her alive and me dead, and I'd go to hell, but I didn't care because I was in hell already and that way at least Lisa would be alive. We flew up to Maine for the funeral. I didn't cry, although almost everybody else at school did. Crying would be pure self-pity, and I was so goddamned sick of self-pity. God, stupid and mean as He seemed to me then, had to have some place for people like Lisa to go after they died; I told myself that over and over, desperately trying to believe it. I mean, Lisa had so much energy in her, so much vitality, so much life. It all had to go somewhere, and it wasn't in her body anymore, so it must be in some kind of heaven, I guessed.

I did a lot of heavy thinking about that one. Lisa in heaven. . .

Well, if Lisa was really in heaven, she was really happy. Okay, she was beyond the reach of e-mails, beyond the reach of calls and letters, but maybe she was closer to me anyway than she had been in Maine. That was

what she had believed, I knew. Despite what I'd told myself about how her vitality had to have gone somewhere, I didn't really buy it for a minute, not emotionally; but intellectually I could accept that death might only be the beginning. But whether or not I could believe that her spirit was up in heaven, I did know that if I succumbed to despair as I so desperately wanted to do, if I took a few dozen sleeping pills and lay down in bed, or if I reopened those old scars on my wrists, I'd be betraying Lisa's spirit as it lived on in me. Lisa had changed me. If I changed back, that'd just be killing a part of her. I had to live for Lisa's sake. I'd heard that sort of thing a million times, but I'd never felt it. Now I did. I came really, really close to making a suicide attempt, but I didn't.

Plus, my life hadn't been unbearable before Lisa died. The people at school weren't any less friendly because Lisa was dead. The weather wasn't any less warm. The school wasn't any less nice. The sun wasn't any less bright. My depression wanted to tell me that none of those things were true, but I got that straightened out in time.

I've made my peace with Lisa at last. I wanted to visit her grave, but that was in Maine. Plus, that was the dead Lisa. I wanted the living Lisa.

What I ended up doing was very simple. I smiled at people. I tried to make myself as much like Lisa as I could. I tried to be nice enough to people that I'd make their lives happier just by being a part of them.

I don't know if I've succeeded. I doubt it. But I'm trying. And I think the trying's as much of a victory as the succeeding would be.

I'm still not over Lisa's death. I don't think I ever will be. I'm still not "all better." I still miss her like crazy, and in my worst moods the memory of her death still tempts me to suicide.

But I won't commit suicide. I'm stronger than that now.

Lisa made me stronger than that.

-Kelly Hourihan, I



A New Beginning

"I have never been so miserable in my life," Ellen Kineavy thought, sitting all alone in her tiny third-class cabin on the *HMS Munchin*, which was not exactly a luxury liner. In all her sixteen years she had never been so lonesome. The constant swaying of the ship did not help much either. She had a bad case of seasickness.

It was early April, 1928. Ellen had been at sea for one and a half days already, on her way from Ireland to the United States. It had been less than forty-eight hours since she had said goodbye to her parents and brothers and sisters, but it seemed like an eternity. Now here she was, sitting on a hard, narrow bunk-bed, absent-mindedly twisting a strand of her curly blond hair around her finger, wishing she were back home on the farm in County Galway with everyone she loved. Instead, she was on her way to join two older sisters, Mary and Katherine, whom she hadn't seen in years, in America, a strange land that everyone said was full of opportunities. She had been incredibly excited about immigrating while she was on the farm, but right now she was just homesick for a life and a country she might never know again.

Ellen had originally planned to go to America two years earlier, when she was fourteen. Her older sister Maggie, who was seventeen at the time, was supposed to take Ellen with her on a ship to New York, and then on to Boston to live with Mary and Katherine, who had set up residence there. Ellen winced at the memory. High-spirited Maggie had caught typhus fever the week before the ship was to sail, while visiting friends of the family at a nearby farm. Their grief-stricken parents had canceled their tickets, and Maggie had died soon afterward. Ellen was too young to go to New York by herself, so she stayed home on the farm with her other siblings, Nonie, Bridie, Steven, and Martin.

Ellen was devastated by her beloved

sister's death, as well as a little bit disappointed about not being able to go to the distant U.S. But she put her dreams of traveling to far-off places out of her mind, and concentrated instead on going to the village school, and helping out on the farm the rest of the time. Their rural farm was small, comprising only about fifty acres of land, and her family was poor. They lived in a small cottage surrounded by pastures. Ellen did not enjoy farmwork very much. Whenever she had to watch the cows grazing in the fields she would take a book with her to read. She developed a strong dislike of snails because she used to step on them in her bare feet whenever she had her nose stuck in a book.

Last year, when she was fifteen, Ellen had been awarded a scholarship to a Teacher's College in Galway City. Unfortunately, her parents did not have enough money to pay for the books and clothes she would need, so there was no way she could attend. It was about this time that she was given the option of going to America by herself, and for the sake of adventure and opportunity she decided to take the chance.

"I suppose if I stayed behind in Ireland I'd have had to become the wife of some poverty-stricken farmer," Ellen mused to herself, trying to fight boredom and sickness in her cabin. At this point even that prospect seemed better than the uncertain future she would have in America. At least getting married in Ireland was a concrete possibility. She had no idea *what* she was going to do once she got to Boston. She could live with her married sister Katherine for awhile, but eventually she'd have to find work somewhere. "It's no use worrying about that now," Ellen sighed. "I'm sure I'll find some way to make a living." Exhausted, she lay down and fell asleep.

Four days later the *HMS Munchin* landed in New York. Somehow Ellen had managed to get through that time. She had



befriended a few of the other passengers, and with their help she managed to get over some of her initial homesickness. Now as the ship docked she stood on deck with everyone else, staring at the Statue of Liberty and waiting to disembark. It was a beautiful day outside. She still had to endure going through Ellis Island and the long train ride to Boston, but things were beginning to look up. The sun was shining brightly and the view of the Statue was awe-inspiring. The gangplank was finally

lowered. Excited, Ellen stepped off of the ship and into her future.

Epilogue: My grandmother moved to Boston and became a cook in a house on the Jamaicaway during the Great Depression. She married my grandfather, Michael Moroney, in 1934. They had seven children, including my mother. Nana is now 87 years old and lives with my aunt in San Jose, California.

-Kate Chevarley, II

Deep Fried

on midway flotation to the T stop
I get a whiff of
 E. Coli-burgers and
 other deep fried food
my stomach growls at my negligence
Okay, I say, I'll go
As I'm entering I remember all
the bad stuff that's in those tempting fries
and burgers
so when I meet the cashier
I go for the "healthy choice"
large strawberry milkshake
Hey, it's got calcium
I sit down and engage myself
in slurping and daydreaming
There's been some background music
for a while, but I've been too absorbed to notice
I listen now
 and start to laugh
and everyone, or at least I think everyone, stares
at me
but I know what's so funny,
to think,
 Burger King and Opera?

-Nicole Tabolt, IV



Awa

As for the heat
I think we will always be warm.
Our existence,
sparked by the fierce summer
as the neon moon drowned our names
and transcended perceptions.
It is funny, but
I can quote him and you and the skatell and Marley
at any given instance.
Driving now I can feel my cheeks blush,
sensing your presence.
You say that I am wanted
and now I feel it for the first time.

From the car I see heaviness chasing shadows
behind the trees,
chuckling.
At the same time,
the wind gently tosses her hair
teasing the rusted leaves of moments,
with name-scratched echoes.
In vain
I try convincing myself that they were meant to
 fall,
 fade;
that memories are designed to give
way.

The hazy present fumbles for my attention.
Now we are starting again,
yet you say all of us live in the past.
Perhaps.
Indeed, those moments melted
to mold me.
Maybe phantoms can't be caught,
but I testify that
my arms aren't empty.

-Aparna Majmudar, I



A Story of the Holocaust

"I am so very tired, so very tired," I think as I look at the plain dilapidated ceiling of our block. I swing my head down from the top bunk and look at my weary father. I remember when his laugh could fill a room. I remember back to the times when he would pick me up after school, and we would walk to Mr. Dusendorf's bakery, five blocks from the schoolyard. Everyday I would get a big, freshly baked, butter-soaked blueberry muffin. I remember helping my father pick out pastries for my mother and my little sister Olga. On the way home, we would take the long route home, through the public parks. If it was a nice day, my father and I would sit and talk on our favorite bench by the little stream that flowed in and around the park.

I focus back in on my father, as he shifts in his sleep. His face is now turned, facing towards me. He opens his eyes and stares into mine. He is only forty-five, but his face is that of a man of sixty-five, and his eyes are those of a man who has experienced his worst nightmares and greatest dreams. A man who has had it all, and had it taken away from him—my father.

"My son," he whispers into the dark silence, his eyes searching for mine to beg forgiveness for ever bringing me into this world. "I am so sorry. There is nothing I can do," he says. With those words a new fear looms inside me. If my father, my very own supporting, strong-minded father has given up hope, then the end must be near; or he just has nothing left to believe in, including me. With that thought in mind, I fall asleep with the lulling buzz of silence piercing the night.

* * *

It was a gray winter day. Long gray clouds strung themselves across the sky. I looked up at the sun, masked behind layers of clouds. It gave forth only a dim, hazy light, the light that represented my life as it slowly faded away.

I shook my head. I should never let thoughts like that cross my mind. Despite everything that had happened so far, everything that would happen—I had to will myself to live, because I wasn't just living for myself: I had my fa-

ther. The only reason I wasn't dead now was my will and motivation. If I let myself die now, what would he have left, to whom could he turn?

All other thoughts aside, I'm glad that I didn't abandon my father, like many others would have done. Even though sometimes it seems as if I'm carrying a one-ton burden, I know God will see us through. But who, what, and where is God? What kind of God would allow such an abomination of mankind to take place and not do anything about it? Where is the God who will deliver my people and me? And still my questions go unanswered, so I've come to a conclusion: there is no God, and if there is, he's a coward for not showing his face.

* * *

"Papa, papa. Wake up, the bell has just rung. It's time to get up," I call to my father. He doesn't move. His face is placidly pale and his hands are ice-cold. "Papa, wake up, the officers will be coming in soon. Please wake up!" I am yelling now, as my greatest fear faces me and all my anger and anguish are clenched in my throat. I don't know what to think, what to say, what to do. My tears flow freely, as I hang my head and walk away.

Outside, the sky is a dull gray blanket hanging overhead. I walk, or stumble, along. My thoughts are jumbled in my head. "WHY?!?!?" I shout in a cry of anger and confusion. The sound echoes, but there is no response. No answer to my question, no answer for my fears—alone. And now I have to take a step back and take a look at myself. What I've become, what I've let myself become. I am not only a prisoner to another man; I am worse, a prisoner to life. Trapped, locked in, and without a key, and there is no escape. No hope.

I look up at the smoke rising from the chimney. "That's the only thing that's free in this place," I think aloud. I look further up at the gray clouds, and it seems as if heaven is closed and God took a vacation away from earth. If it were possible for me, I would do so also. But I can't.

It's a nightmare now, and there are no stars to wish on, because there is nothing to wish for. I



remember when the nights were clear and my sister and I would sit on the porch and watch the stars. And always we would make a wish on a star that we would always be together and protect each other. I think of her now, my sister Olga. Her big

brown eyes, her perfect little nose, and her perfect smile, everything perfect. My whole life perfect, and then it was shattered, broken, and scattered.

-Aisha Cort, III



The Cup That Wasn't

"The World Cup is in good hands"
Were the only words spoken
By the coach to the Brazilian fans,
Expecting the greatest victory token.

They had swept by Scotland and Morocco,
In the earlier rounds.
But they floundered against Norway
when no victory was found.

Swiftly did their wounds heal,
And they did bounce back.
As they knocked off Chile and Denmark
with their sporadic attack.

Their next match against Holland
Was forecasted to be great.
And though they nearly lost,
Victory was their fate.

One match remained
Against the host nation, France.
To win the World Cup,
The team would have only one chance.

The Brazilians wore their traditional yellow.
The French were dressed in royal blue.
As the players took the field,
Chant was all the fans could do.

Now, the French were on the board first;
The score, one to zero.
For Brazil, the game rested now
On the shoulders of Ronaldo, their hero.

But even before he could
Muster an attack,
The French scored again,
Leaving little hope for a comeback.

By now it was evident
That the French had come to play.
As for the mighty Brazilians,
It would not be their day.

When the third goal was scored,
It became clear to all,
That at the hands of the French,
The Brazilian nation would fall.

"The thrill of victory,
The agony of defeat."
The French knew that beating Brazil
Was a tremendous feat.

And that is how the reign
Of the Brazilians came to an end.
But in four years, they will be back
To battle for glory once again.

-Andrew Dubrowski, II

The Finch

It happened that this morning I woke up by my own body clock. It was a Thursday, but it did not feel like one. As I rose, the sun penetrated my window and danced high on the walls of my room. I smiled, sat up on my bed, and thought to myself how lucky I was to be smiling at six-thirty on a Thursday morning.

I walked across my room and threw up the window. I was greeted by a gush of warm fresh air, and my smile spread wider. It was the perfect time to recite a few couplets, but since I had none memorized, I consented to singing in the shower. This was going to be the first day of spring: not the twenty-first of March, but some day in late April when the New England air feels warm, the daffodils are in their prime and the trees are green with young leaves.

When I came down to breakfast, I found that my family was equally light-hearted. For once, my mother did not worry that my sister didn't eat enough breakfast, and my father did not scold us for being too slow in the morning. That day, I felt as if I could do anything. I could score the winning goal in a soccer game, argue any point in my civics class, and get even Drew Barrymore's phone number.

My mother offered sweetly to drive my sister to her school, which was the longer commute. For that moment especially I loved her. For on any other day, this might have happened simply by course, but on that day she had offered in order to preserve the day as good—with neither petty argument nor interruption. My father would drive me to school. We took our time, leaving a few minutes later.

We walked out of our house, saxophone, briefcase, and lunches in hand. I said, "Dad, you know what? This is perfect baseball weather." He smiled in agreement, as there was really nothing to say. Maurice was out gardening in front of his brick apartment across the street. The large black man was stooped over, but he seemed to rejoice in his work. I tossed my bags into the car as my father exchanged greetings with Maurice.

"Good morning, beautiful day, huh?"

"Yeah, yeah," Maurice sighed as beads of perspiration collected on his temples for the first time that year. There was a very comfortable moment of silence, as we all breathed deeply to enjoy the spring air.

"Look at that finch," my father said, pointing at a small bird that had alighted on a branch above us. I laughed to myself, slightly embarrassed at my father, who I was sure did not know the difference between a finch and a chickadee. I was afraid that Maurice knew what kind of bird it was. However, I put my qualms aside, because this was the first day of spring, and this bird represented all the renewal, the life, and the hope that this day beckoned.

"Here comes the beast!" my dad remarked. Maurice gave a chuckle, and when I repeated this in my head, I was embarrassed at how corny my father had sounded. But as I gazed at that jay, I hated myself for being embarrassed at my own father's ignorance. The jay hopped to another branch and then to the same limb on which the finch was perched. We stood there silently waiting and watching, with the sun warm on our necks. The little finch stood straight and tall and proud, but the jay looked around cautiously, its head bobbing from side to side. The jay came up next to the finch, paused, and in one swift move fixed its beak around the finch's neck. The jay flew off with its prey. The cries of the finch ceased in mid-flight as his little neck was broken.

We stood--stunned. We mustered up a few words and an uncomfortable chuckle. We had witnessed something terrible, yet natural; we could have done something to change nature's course, but didn't. As we drove away in silence, I felt a connection with my father. The cars swirled around us, ignorant of our pain and our wisdom. And still the birds chirped, the flowers were in bloom, and the sun pierced the car window, warm on the back of our necks.

-Jacob Bor, III



Hard Times

I sat down on the rain-soaked lawn and gazed up at the sky, which appeared to be filled with diamonds. It had rained all day and now the clouds had parted, although you could see more clouds off the horizon. A cool spring breeze lifted the hair out of my face and caressed my bare arms. I closed my eyes and tried to block out the loud rock music playing in the house behind me. What I needed right now was to be alone. Too much had happened in the past few months and I still needed to sort things out.

"What are you sitting here for, Ro? The party's inside," I smiled. My eyes were still closed but in my mind's eye I could see the short, stout boy behind me, and I could feel his hazel eyes burning into my back.

"I just needed some air," I said without turning around.

"Yeah, but you're sitting by yourself." He came over to me and sat down. "Not to mention that sitting on wet grass will leave an unsightly wet spot on your jeans."

"I really don't care," I replied laughing. Jorge and I had been best friends for nearly ten years and he always had a way of making me laugh no matter how depressed I was.

I opened my eyes and turned towards him. His face was turned towards the sky so I could only see his profile and when the wind blew I could smell his Polo Sport cologne. I smiled again and leaned on his shoulder. He put his arm around me and gave me a hug. I took a deep breath, but suddenly the smell of his cologne seemed to fade and it was replaced by the unmistakable sweet smell of marijuana. I sat up quickly and his face turned towards mine. His usually bright eyes were blood-shot.

"Your eyes are red," I told him.

He looked away and there was a brief moment of silence before he asked, "Are you mad?"

"Yes . . . no . . . I don't know," I answered. "Right now. . . I'm feeling just about everything right now. How could you do this?" I asked, pick-

ing at the blades of grass at my feet. "Why would you want to do it?"

"I don't know," he answered slowly. He hesitated a little before he added "I'm sorry, Ro. It was a mistake."

It was a mistake. How many times had I heard that said over and over for the past few months? How many times had my own brother, Jose, said those same words to me after I asked him why he smoked? And months later, how many times had I told myself that what I was doing was just a mistake? How many times had I repeated those four words until they were just an automatic answer and meant absolutely nothing? I tried to swallow but the knot in my throat wouldn't let me.

"Save it, Jorge. I know you've done it before. I've seen you, so don't treat me like I'm stupid. I know what it's like," I said angrily. "You know better than anyone else what I had to put up with, first with Jose and then with me. It's not easy, Jorge. It's hell and I don't want you to go through it."

"Ro, please, don't get upset," he said pulling me towards him and hugging me. "I'm sorry." After a minute I realized he was crying. I realized he had had it rough, and that I wasn't the only one hurting.

I rested my head on his shoulder and the tears that had been gathering in my eyes fell down my cheeks. I wanted to tell him it was okay, that I could help him, and that everything would go back to normal, but the overpowering smell of weed was too much for me. It brought back too many painful memories of Jose coming home high and wasted. It brought back too many recent memories of me sitting across the table from my mom and trying to explain to her as she cried why I was screwing up like Jose. Trying to tell her that it was a mistake, that I never meant to hurt her, and that I was sorry.

How could I possibly help Jorge when I was barely getting through this myself? How could I tell him things would go back to normal when



my own life had been hastily put back together and could fall apart at the drop of a dime?

These thoughts ran in my mind as we sat on the wet lawn, hugging and crying. And when the rain began to fall again, it was Jorge who noticed it first and suggested that we go home. I got up and followed him to his car. I stopped once to

let the cold rain fall on my face. It was refreshing.

Nothing was solved that night and I didn't expect it to be. Jorge didn't promise me anything and I didn't ask him. The ground beneath my feet was too shaky to have two people trying to crawl over it. I think Jorge saw that and he chose to let me take care of myself before I could help him.

-Romina Gomez, III

Stargazing

On a pure morning
with sinshine decomposing
over the dusky hills
the true believers
call on heaven
to aid them
in their godlessness.

Every morning
the foulcalls cry
and the inhumanity
of humanity
becomes more apparent.
Should heaven,
knowing all
(or just what it knows),
help those
thrill-seeking
religion seekers?

Gaze up at the air
and notice those who stare
at the obscenity
of devotion.

-William Young, I



Night Regiment

I lie to myself
pen in hand
at 1:40 in the morning,
my paper lit up
by the faint glow
of the muted T.V.
showing nothing but
infomercials.
I catalog my burdens
in a notebook
letting them be soaked
up in its pores.
Better there
than on my shoulders.
I wipe my thoughts
that drip like
sweat
clean off my brow
and I realize
at 1:51 in the morning
I run on empty.
Daydreams
now become
nightdreams
and my emptied
mind
becomes an omni
screen
on which only images
of love
(and like)
are projected.
I have the
Delta of Venus
in my mind
and under my pillow
as I relinquish
my weighted
eyelids
to the
night.

-Kaitlyn Jolly, III

Childhood Friend

we lived in a world of fantasy
dolls, trolls and make-believe
roamed the earth
but now they're all extinct
homework and boyfriends
drugs and school
got into our veins
distance and time
have separated us
there was a fork in the road
and we didn't choose the same
path
I don't know which one was
better
 down the highway
maybe we'll meet again
memories and reality have
collided
dolls and stories have parted
childhood is just a milestone
we passed together holding
hands
no trace of you
except broken friendship
bracelets
a metaphor of what would
come
we had hope and dreams
of living our lives together
how silly that seems now

-Nicole Tabolt, IV



Deer Boy

He didn't look like much. He was small and grimy and had thick glasses that magnified his eyes so he looked like a deer. A rotten, stinking deer. His clothes were creased and stained and even though he looked like an eleven-year-old, his eyes gave away the secret of his real age. To tell you the truth, if it were on any other day, and I wasn't on a train in the suburbs, I wouldn't have cared what the kids did to him. Sometimes we rise to the occasion in the weirdest situations, that's all.

Ah, Suburbia! Home to the soft-as-a-pillow Abercrombie-wearing money-clippers and their hair-in-a-ponytail empty-headed girlfriends. When these four burbies got on the train, screaming curses loud and proud and stinking of wine coolers that Saturday night, I smiled to myself and automatically knew two things about them: 1.) they all had tolerances of five-year-old Catholic school girls, and 2.) they knew they had numbers, so trouble was a-brewing. Personally, I was surprised to see them on the train, seeing they should all have had Sedans by then, but whatever.

Anyways, on the train, there's me, a lanky, goofy-looking kid with my hat down low and the brim curved over my face, clutching a big, shiny, black folder from a school program I was taking in the suburbs; an Italian paisano with arms as big as my head, which is abnormally large, I might add; his girlfriend, this wicked hot black girl; Deer Boy, as I now called him; and Wally Cleaver times four. I swear to God, you could've made a sitcom out of it.

Of course the burbies aren't going to mess with a guy who would pop your head if it got stuck between his arm and he flexed, and I guess they must've thought I was asleep, because my hat covered my face, and my head was leaning against the window, contemplating how to spend the remaining hours of my Saturday night stuck in my house (I was

grounded). And they were too sloshed to notice Deer Boy, poor, pitiful Deer Boy sitting on the corner on the train, eyes straight ahead, clutching his fluorescent green money belt. So at first, these All-Americans sat there and ogled the Italian guy's girlfriend. The stares, sneers, and snide remarks quickly ceased as the Italian dude shot a reproachful glance at them and cracked his knuckles in a threatening fashion.

"Italians are so descriptive with their hands," I smugly thought to myself. This short but effective display of brute strength forced our four fine friends to endeavor themselves in another shameless activity, one less damaging to their health.

And this is where they saw Deer Boy. He was sitting across from me and had giggled in a shamefully girlish manner at the Italian dude's subtle actions. To tell you the truth, maybe if I were with my friends, I would have been ragging on him too. But anyways, one of the burbies tapped his friends and a small huddle formed. Whispers loud enough to be only partially heard came from the opposite end of the train, laced with slurring and fake Boston accents. Deer Boy resumed his position of eyes straight ahead and legs crossed, as our dear friends bravely strode to our end of the train.

At this point, the Italian dude had kissed his girlfriend and prepared to exit the train, but not before giving a look of contempt to the four stooges as he saw what they had planned to do. And then he turned towards me, gave me a nod, followed by a you-know-what-you-have-to-do-look. And then he got off the train.

I heaved a heavy sigh and cursed him under my breath. If he hadn't given me that look I could've probably left the train unscathed. But few people can understand this look and even fewer can dish it out. John Wayne was the best at it. This is the look that



coaches give to their players, teachers to their students and, apparently, big Italian dudes to goofy-looking fifteen-year-olds trying to mind their own business. This is a look you can't back down from because if you do, you will be plagued with something much worse than any broken rib or busted nose: regret. And that doesn't heal as quickly.

I knew what I had to do, but in hopes of some miracle, I decided to let them initiate contact with Deer Boy, instigator that he was.

"Please," I prayed to a higher being, "just let them leave him alone."

This Higher Being in particular must have an extreme distaste for me. So one of the friendly li'l country club kids smacked Deer Boy upside the head and addressed him with a name that would not be polite to mention, and I am polite. Deer Boy sat there, even more wide-eyed than usual, unable to say anything, do anything, because he was so petrified.

Apparently, this response was not good enough for the burbies, so one of them repeated the action, but also spit in his face and dragged him up—even tiny as Deer Boy was, the loser could not lift him—from his seat and pushed him to his friend. Thus began a little game of catch which, although it lasted only about 10 seconds, spread out for an eternity. I could hear the Deer Boy's squeals of terror and saw his face get red from crying, and I saw the girl staring not at them, but at me, waiting impatiently for me to do something.

I'm not at all that strong or quick, but when you come down to the bare essentials,

fists, I'm a pretty good fighter. So I guess I got angry and, in my best tough-guy voice, said something very nasty about all their genealogical histories. Then, without waiting for a response, I pushed the nearest kid to the ground. This wasn't hard because he was wicked drunk anyway.

The thing about the burbies is that if you take one out, you take them all out. I was hoping this was the case as I punched the kid a couple of times in the face and demanded that he leave the Deer Boy alone, laced with a nasty oath and curse here and there. He was pretty tough for a suburban kid, but he was a suburban kid so soon he complied.

Well, I didn't have those kids crying to their mamas and I was threatened by them with all sort of nasty epithets, including some against my Irish background, but as more people got on the train they got off. And so did Deer Boy, whose eyes were down, without ever looking at me or thanking me. I was so glad I didn't get too messed up in the scuffle, just a couple of welts from some half-assed punches.

So I got off at Park Street and so did the black girl. She slapped me five, laughed, said something like, "I knew you had it in you," hugged me, and, all in all, embarrassed me. I kind of wished I had rescued her instead, because she was wicked fine, and I thought about writing it that way, but I didn't. And although my "damsel in distress" was less than five feet tall and smelled kind of funny, it was nice to be the hero for a change.

-Ross Forbes, II



The Shell

Among the woodchips and pachysandra of my backyard I came across a nutshell of some sort, though half of it was missing. No doubt this was the leftovers of the meal of some squirrel passing through. Its casing was like pumice stone, full of miniature canyons, hard and jagged, with small pieces of dirt between its walls. The outer wall looked as if it could keep any animal crazy enough to attempt to take its prize out for good. Yet, upon turning it over, one could see that it had indeed been broken open, and that inside there was a smooth brown interior, more fit for a god than an animal. The inhabitant, the yummy meat of the nut, had long since been devoured, but two long crevices remained where it once resided. There are tiny holes on the shell which had been made by burrowing insects looking to get the goods first, but the perpetrators had all left, looking to other similar shells with the same goals. Now this ghost of a glorious shell was lying beaten and bruised in my backyard among the woodchips and pachysandra, as if it were nothing more than a shell that once held a peanut or a pistachio.

-Paul Stankus, II



The Coin Toss

"Beep Beep, Beep Beep, Be. . ." David's pager went off while he was chilling at his girlfriend Robyn's house in Newton. It read: 216-42-411-911. Apparently his friend had something on his mind he needed to talk about. As Dave dialed the number he thought about how many things he and Ricky had shared over the course of their friendship. *"He has been there for me through everything, when my grandpa got sick and then when he got real sick; he took me in when I got kicked out of my house; we've done everything together since we were fifteen. I hope he is okay."* He thought not too far back to when their other friend, Paul, died in a domestic squabble, and how they had helped each other with the emotions they went through because of that trauma. As far as Dave was concerned, Ricky or Ric-Dogg (as he was commonly known) was his brother, and Dave held nothing closer to him than family.

The phone rang twice, and Ric-Dogg picked it up.

"What's wrong, dude?" Dave asked as his mind started imagining very bad things. The silence that ensued after this question spoke volumes about the state of Ricky's mind.

"Can you come pick me up?" was all he managed to mutter, his voice trembling with every word.

"I'll be there in ten minutes." Dave hung up the receiver, knowing Robyn was staring dead at him with an angry look on her face. He turned to her and said, "I gotta go." He picked up his baby blue UNC hat and jacket and turned to leave. Robyn stopped him and yelled, "You're always leaving me for your friends; it's as if you care more about them than you do about me." Dave looked at her with his cool, calm, and honest smile and said, "I do."

While the door was slamming he laughed silently, realizing his philosophy of "Friends before Flings" had cost him another

big relationship. But this was his best friend who'd been there before any of the girls, and would be there after, too. He knew once again he had made the right decision. Ricky had to be really hurting before he called anyone for help. It was 8:33, one and a half minutes since his beeper had gone off, but already much had happened.

He opened the door to his Lincoln Navigator or The Ride (as everyone called it) and started the engine. The irrepressible piano sounds mixed with the deep hard-core bass-line of *November Rain* filled the cabin through the twenty-speaker sound system he and Ricky had installed earlier that month. He had a feeling that tonight his boy's life was going to take a drastic turn, but he wasn't sure which direction the turn would lead.

Dave knew everything about Ric-Dogg, so he tried to figure out what could cause his friend so much fear. He started going through Ricky's life. He and his parents had been on good terms since his grades improved. They never caught him and Ricky doing any of the crazy stuff they did do, so it couldn't be that. His oldest sister, Kristin, was a violent drug addict, but she had left home over a year ago, so it wasn't her. His other older sister, Jen, was in a mentally abusive relationship, which was painful for him to watch. However, he knew he couldn't do anything about it, so he let go of that issue awhile ago. His younger sister Jackie, an alcoholic by the age of fifteen, was a lost cause. He was the only member of his family who realized how bad she had become in her short life. He tried to get over it, but now and again she would set him off. He had been arrested several times because he always wanted to protect her, so he would take the blame for many of her antics. He also was known for not letting any of her boyfriends mistreat her in any way. He and Dave had a rap sheet about an inch thick for keeping Jackie safe. He didn't care because in some cases it was necessary to keep Jackie



alive and to keep Ricky from falling apart. It could be her, but Ric-Dogg never sounded that distant and scared due to his sisters, so Dave doubted that theory.

Ricky, in his early years, had had pretty much an easy time with girls. Recently, though, he was settling down. He had been with one girl for almost a year now. Everything seemed to be going smoothly; even though he and Shauna were exact opposites, they seemed to get along. She was a "good girl," did well in school, was nice, quiet, listened to what she was told to do and did not do anything her friends deemed bad. Ricky had always been down for anything. He learned about life by living, while she learned by stories she was told. There definitely was an attraction, though. All his friends liked her and most of her friends liked him. They hung out so much that their groups of friends had actually intertwined and formed a decent-sized crew. About a week ago, Shauna had said she loved him. Ricky told Dave that he responded the only way he could. He told her that he was glad she trusted him that much, but he didn't feel the same. Truthfully, he couldn't; everyone who was supposed to love this kid ended up hurting him to the soul. Granted, she was not someone who would do that, but Ricky was just looking out for himself.

Slash's guitar solo boomed through the SUV, and Dave knew this problem had to do with Shauna. Ricky's house was within sight, so he lowered the volume a tad and pulled up in front. The rain drops at the end of the song were fading as Ricky came down his front steps with his pockets bulging. Dave knew just from this sight where they were headed. Ricky jumped up into The Ride and filled the vehicle with his silence.

The Cliff was where they went to talk and chill when they wanted to be alone. They had done so since they were fourteen. It was their practice to bring only two beers, because if they got drunk they wouldn't be able to solve their current situation. Ricky had always

been the best with music so Dave let him control the radio when he was in the car. This time, though, he just let the silence continue until he thought Dave understood the severity of the issue at hand. After five minutes of silence Ricky found their CD case, and put *How's It Gonna Be* in the CD player. Dave couldn't help but think that whatever was on Ric's mind went deeper than he thought.

From the cliff they could see everything: the Arboretum, the Airport, the water, everything. It was a great spot for them to clear their heads. They tapped their bottles together and poured the first sip over the side of the truck for their friend Paul. Dave drank his beer slowly, watching his friend for any sign of thought or emotion. There was none; he just was not ready to talk about this problem. So his ice-cold expression remained intact, as did the *silence*.

Ricky finished his brew first, tapped it twice on the roof and tossed it over the cliff. After this came the first sign. Ricky stood up on the hood of The Ride and screamed, shattering the *silence* like a piece of glass. This outburst lasted about half a minute, and as it neared its conclusion Dave could hear Ric-Dogg start to cry. He sat down in a heap on the front of the car and let the tears flow freely. Dave knew just to let him finish; he would be ready to talk then. So he sat there listening to his friend's tears disturb the silence.

Finally Ricky turned to Dave and asked him, "Have you ever stood at a point with your heart's desire in reach, but are scared to grab it because if you do you stand to lose everything?"

"What the hell kind of question is that?" was Dave's response.

"Just answer the question."

"Nah, dude," Dave stated, wishing he could help his friend. A silence went on that Dave didn't like so he blurted out, "Why are you so scared? What's wrong?"

Ricky then said something Dave wasn't prepared for. "I met someone, someone great. We have so much in common. She makes me







Amir

laugh, I make her laugh, we have fun, and I certainly could see us having fun for a long time. She makes me feel like a better person, like anything is possible. She could be *the one*."

Dave was just curious so he asked, "Who is it?"

"Do you remember Gia from JOD's party?" Dave nodded his head because he did remember her, but he still didn't quite understand the problem. "It's great that you like her, but what's wrong?"

"What's wrong?" Ricky repeated the question and then looked out over the city with all its lights and glow like it was the last time he ever would. Dave saw that his boy was putting together something from awhile ago.

Ricky spoke after a minute or two.

"About two years ago, I was with a girl named Jess, remember that?" Dave nodded. "We were together for about eight months, during which we grew close. You will also recall that all our friends became tight too. B.O. Lovett was my best boy back then, and we were always together, it helped at first that my and Jess's friends got along so well. Over the course of the relationship, though, I grew soft. I would do anything for this chick: I gave up Friday night basketball at the Irving because she wanted to chill at home. She would get mad about pretty much everything and instead of stopping that riff raff, I just apologized to avoid a fight, so basically I sold out hard-core." Dave was taking this all in, but still didn't really see a connection yet.

Ricky went on. "After about six months of that, I got tired of it all and decided to change a little, so instead of apologizing to her, I would flip out right back. She didn't like that at all, so she would get even angrier, and I would leave. So rumors started circulating shortly after that I was cheating on Jess with a friend named Janice. The bad part was that everyone believed them. This was sort of the downfall of the union, and Jess and I began spending less and less time together. Unfortunately, because our friends had become

good friends, my time with them lessened as well. The moral of the story is that the last time this situation arose, I lost everything. If I stay, I have to wonder what could have been."

Dave sat there, finally realizing that his friend was terrified because he knew the pain of losing it all, and he was in the same situation and he did not want to go through it all again. "That is some Movie of the Week stuff right there," Dave said to ease his friend. They both laughed, and Dave could tell Ricky was feeling a little better. "What are you gonna do?" asked Dave, as he got off the top of his car and looked for the keys. "Same thing as I always do, flip a coin," was Ricky's smart-aleck remark. Dave laughed and knew his boy was all right for now. Ricky continued. "Honestly, I don't know what my course of action is going to be, but it will be tough."

"*I can't escape the life that I'm living, I'm in the mix, I'm in love with two women.*" The lyric of *Me and My Crazy World* was loud and clear. "*So true for my boy,*" thought Dave. They got back into The Ride and Dave started the engine, but then stopped abruptly. "Dude, we can't leave yet!"

"Why not?"

"We never leave until the problem is solved, you know that."

Ricky looked at him and said, "How would you like me to solve this one? Gia lives in Brighton, Shauna in HP, and we are in Rozzi. Explain to me, O Bright One." Dave reached into his inside coat pocket and produced his lucky quarter. With a quick grab, it was in Ricky's hand. They both stared as the coin left his thumb. The stirring sounds of the song *Bitter Sweet Symphony* swept through the speakers and out into the dark night as the coin went up through the sunroof. They both watched in silence as Ricky's fate went spinning in the night.

Flip flip flip flip flip. . .

-Ryan Hansen, II

Saturday Night with Nona

Nona and I went
again and again
to the wakes of the unknown
countrymen
not to be buried
under their
 lemon-scented
Sicilian villages—

Nona
 black gowned
with her gray hair
eternally
tied in a knot
at the nape
of her
unwrinkled
olive complexion
neck
where
 her lava black
voice
lay in wait
to ambush
 alien attacks
made upon
her people
 who enshrine
their nature soil
 in
flower pots
which
 house
sweet basil
and sometimes
 oregano
Her tattered-worn
patrician
umbrella
became
 a parasol

when
 not clasped
to her peasant
wrist—
 to protect
her soft
skin
from
the tropical
midday
 Nona and I
 ate and drank
 our way
 through
hundreds and thousands
 of funeral parlor
sandwiches
and pop
on Saturday
nights
—until
this day
I cannot
eat
 a sandwich
Nor
drink
 a pop
on Saturday night
without
 thinking
of the
lemon-scented
Sicilian villages
which
 I know
I shall never
 see. . .

-Joseph-Ralph Ruffino
World Language Department

Sunset

The sun was setting low over the mechanized horizon, glistening on the metallic and glass arms of man reaching toward space. The low blood red sun sinking through the haze of smog, turning it a deep orange streaking with yellows and reds in the blackwater of the jets that never ceased to corrode the silence of the skies. Plumes of thick heavy gray smoke rose gravely into the beyond with a thin streak of rosy light from the setting sun accentuating its malicious ascent.

A man reached the roof of the building winded, but zealous and eager. A close-by skyscraper loomed before him. Brilliant pinks and oranges played on its normally pale facade of hewn stone and hot glass. A thousand reflections of the same radiant sunset all staring him in the face, towering above him, and sinking far below him. With a slight hop, he stood on the ledge and stared down at the misery and black he knew so well. The exhaust of humanity rose up to him like a warm noxious breeze, and kissed his face softly, like an old friend. All around him were the bloody colors of the sun, and the haunting presence of painful memories.

He inhaled deeply, closed his eyes, and turning his head towards the sky, blew it a kiss goodbye. His last tear formed in his eye and trickled slowly down his dry cheek, leaving a trail along his tawny brown face, to the tip of his chin, and froze. He remembered every sensation of the warm salty drop rolling lethargically down his cheek, and it finally fell into the abyss. Slipping from the edge, spreading his arms out wide to greet the increasing wind. For a second he flew, and "Freedom!" was his last thought.

- Barrett Dillow, I



Untitled

Slow Dancing

The music changes
Two by two,
They couple up.
Swaying slowly
Lost in a world
Of 4 1/2 minutes
Of ecstasy.
Lips join, eyes close,
Thoughts become
Meaningless
Is this what love is?
The music changes
Reality returns
It's ninth grade
And it was only a dance.

Heartbreak

I saw them together
And my heart fell to the
floor
He put his arms around her
And I heard my heart shat-
ter
They started to dance
And I picked up the pieces
Their lips joined
And I dropped them again.

-Meghan Sullivan



The Train Ride

It is a hot, sunny afternoon outside the passenger car. The tall silver birches are rushing by the open window of the room like gray phantoms, a row of endless sentinels vanishing as soon as they appear. Their tall trunks stand only a few feet away from my dirty little window of the passengers' car. Cool shadows of branches and leaves flutter briefly over the small table before the harsh bright noon sun obliterates them. Another tree passes. The shadows play. The cycle starts again.

The room thumps every five seconds exactly. I count the rhythm of the rattling trains by the rippling surface of my cup of tea. Looking around the room I see the four lonely occupants of the tiny cell. Father is sleeping against the wall, head on a small cotton pillow. Mother is lying asleep on his shoulder in the next seat. Deep in slumber beside me is my younger brother, hoarding nearly all the space on our side of the room. Right hand on the windowsill, left hand holding the cup of tea, I sit gazing at the bright glint of sunlight polishing the smooth stainless steel table. The shadow of trees seems to become more frequent, but the bright spot never loses one degree of blinding brilliance.

I shift a little on the hard leather seat as I turn to look out the window. Water buffaloes roam lazily over the watery rice paddies in solitude. Far off, a mixture of black brick houses and mud huts line up against a grove of bamboo trees. Crossing the band of rice fields between the rumbling train and the quaint dwellings is a lonely farmer plowing a field with his oxen, in the timeless patient manner of his father, and his father's father, and all those before him.

The train moves on. The scene repeats over and over before me, sitting in the mo-

notonous, hypnotic thumping of the train as it flies over the hand-laid tracks. Then slowly, strange green hills appear in the background. Against the level plains of the fields, the hills with their perfect round tops and sharp sides stand out as glaring seers over the backs of the tiny figures of the farmers.

The hills creep slowly closer and closer to the train. Each passing of the gray barks of the birches unveils a new hill, slightly different from the one before. The rice fields soon vanish without a trace, replaced by wild fields of green weeds and tiny specks of white, blue, and pink flowers dotting the landscape and the ever-present form of the green hills, each larger and more ominous than the one before. A muffled sound comes from the front of the train. Then the small cabin is suddenly plunged into darkness. I blink my eyes and find myself staring at the roots of the birches towering above. A wall of wind slams into my face as the train is launched into another dark tunnel. Tunnel after tunnel comes between flashes of rain-washed earth, uniform in the yellow sands of erosion.

Before long, I find myself staring at the bits and pieces of wood partly unearthed by the rainfall. Not far from the window, I glimpse the inscriptions on some of the more recent slates, names over faceless skeletons. Blue ribbons and white ribbons cling to the naked trunks as gentle breezes carry them away from their original caves. Wordless, the train rumbles onward through the graves. The train enters a final tunnel as the sky starts to darken, turning the crimson sky with red rays. The train rattles on in the darkness, lit only dimly by an incandescent bulb. I sleep.

-Robert Huang, 11



How to Score an 'A' in Mr. X's Class

Scrambling down the hallowed halls of Boston Latin School, loose papers flying, fluttering into the air before quickly being snatched down again, the notorious Mr. X hurries, breathless and hassled. He thrusts by students and teachers alike, amidst both friendly and restrained cries of "Good morning, Mr. X!" nodding to acknowledge various greetings. The hallway is never-ending, a multitude of huge backpacks pushing and shoving and flapping up and down, only to be tossed suddenly on the floor, with a *thud*, barely audible over the gigantic, simultaneous slap of locker doors against the neatly divided havens of pictures and mirrors in the wall. Mr. X scurries along, his head proudly in the air, his eyes focused on his destination: the big, roomy chair, seated directly behind his big, roomy desk, in one of the big, roomy classrooms at the end of the squished, narrow hallway. Having completed his journey, he is now perched on the edge of his seat, his papers spread out magnificently before him, the energy and intensity that he displayed in the hallway trying desperately to catch up.

Mr. X is not mean or scary or intimidating or unfair or unjust or even boring. He is not any of the adjectives often associated with teachers whose classes are "impossible" to pass. He is simply difficult and is eager to challenge the bright, young Latin scholars seated before him. Therefore, passing his class is not a strenuous activity. One needn't even break into a sweat to receive an 'A' (gasp). One merely must follow some rules.

Rule Number One: Try to emulate Mr. X as much as possible. Jog, sprint, leap to class so that you are seated with book and notebook open, handouts organized neatly on desk, easily readable, pen poised. Highlighters are recommended, but if one finds them too confusing to keep track of, dismiss this idea altogether. Do not engage in mindless conversation with those seated around you, unless, of

course, it involves sports. Mr. X is an enthusiastic fan of the Red Sox, Celtics, Bruins, Patriots, and any and all Latin triumphs. (Hint: Don't mess with Mr. X's vast knowledge of sports trivia. The man knows. All.)

Mr. X will communicate, without any ambiguity, when he wants class to begin. As soon as the first few words escape his mouth, begin hastily to jot them down. Jot *everything* down. *Everything*: even idiosyncrasies such as Latin translation for "Bomb the Blue." Although irrelevant to Vergil's Aeneid, make no mistake: it will be on the test.

As Mr. X orates the English translation, copy it down exactly. (Do not rely on the surplus of sheets he will hand out at the end of class.) Be prepared to be confused. Follow along with the Latin as much as possible, and make grammar notes directly above the sentence where pertinent. Do not wait for Mr. X to point things out for you: make your own observations on your completed—I repeat, completed—homework the night prior to class.

Do not be afraid to ask questions; however, do not ask them frequently. Process all information sputtered out: recurring questions will not be tolerated.

"Learn yah vocab!" Jot down all unknown words and memorize their genitive, gender, and meaning. Also, it's wise to learn some English derivatives; there will be five or ten extra credit questions on the test.

Take time to breathe.

When Mr. X casually suggests that there "may be a quiz tomorrow," don't be fooled: there **will** be a quiz tomorrow. Therefore, prepare. Study all your notes and review all your vocabulary. Do not memorize, but have an understanding of both the Latin and its translation.

Sleep well and eat heartily before the major examination. Pretend it's your last meal.

During the test, tune out what Mr. X is

saying as much as possible: this is your time now, and although he likes to ramble throughout the test, adding last-minute helpful hints, it's flat-out distracting. You should be confident. You have followed the rules.

Lastly . . . stress out. As much as pos-

sible. Yet take time to enjoy the humor, albeit offbeat, and the intelligence of Mr. X. Laugh if you're comfortable enough, but try not to lose your focus. Enjoy. Exhale at last. Latin may have killed the Romans, but Mr. X's class will not kill you.

-Maura McDonald, II



An Open Message to the Super Villains

The streets are plagued with criminal activity. No matter which direction one looks, crime is not far off. Mainly, this is because of you, the Super Villains, and your cronies and henchmen. The life work of each of you as a Super Villain is either to take over the world in which we live or to destroy your arch nemesis as part of an intricate scheme put into effect in order to accomplish the previously mentioned goal. My message to you, Super Villains, is to change your evil ways, to reform and to find a new role to play in society. By reforming yourselves you can put your minds together to create rather than destroy, to do something constructive with your unique skills and powers, and to create a healthier, more relaxed mental and physical lifestyle for yourselves. It worked for me. For you see, I too was once a Super Villain, bent on ruling the world, but the market is too competitive and dangerous. For my own safety and for my lovely wife Helen, I gave up the business.

There comes a time in the life of every Super Villain when he must give up the fight against the good and the moral and rethink his life's direction. All that you create with your work is chaos and pain, and, although that may be your primary purpose or goal, you also create a population of enemies. If you ever would succeed in taking over the world, you would only be ruling an unstable populous fueled with fear and hatred that would ultimately rebel against you and your tyrannical, evil rule.

Retiring seems like a good option for you at this juncture of life and career. Don't you, as a Super Villain, get sick and tired of being hated by everyone all of the time? It wreaks havoc with your self esteem. This may be fueling your inner rage and making you even more evil, which in itself may cause more hatred towards you as you unleash it. That is all hypothetical but it could be true in some of your cases.

Another aspect of your chosen profession that hurts your self esteem is the constant failing. Every time you begin to set an evil plan into motion, whether it be stealing nuclear weapons or hypnotizing New Jersey, it is thwarted by a Super Hero. The Super Hero is only trying to help you rehabilitate yourself, but you use it as an excuse for your failures and strive to destroy your detested adversary. Take, for example, Lex Luther, the self-proclaimed "Most Powerful Man in Metropolis" (Lex, I hope you are reading this and paying close attention). Lex Luther has made countless attempts to take over the world and destroy his nemesis, Superman. He has come close but he has never accomplished anything in the long run. He has created a bi-clone of Superman with equal strength, has kidnapped Superman's loved ones, and has even found a very rare piece of Kryptonite, Superman's only weakness, and made a ring out of it. All these attempts have failed.

It is rather sad and pathetic to see a balding middle-aged man wearing a glowing green ring shaking his fist from a jail cell while proclaiming himself the "Most Powerful Man in Metropolis." It is sad because he could be just that. He could be the most powerful man in Metropolis if only he would take the straight and narrow path. As most of you Super Villains probably know, Lex Luther owns a highly profitable business in Metropolis and is a sharp, respected businessman. He could take some advice from Dr. Evil's number two man (AKA Number Two), who once said of taking over the world, "There is no world anymore. . . only corporations."

You as professional Super Villains have a world of opportunity at your finger tips and it is there for the taking. Retiring is just one of the many colors on the spectrum of change. Charisma is a characteristic that each one of you possesses. I have heard you spout witty commentary to your enemies when you be-



lieve them to be helpless, when you feel yourself to be the cock of the walk. Each one of you is too cocky and you underestimate your opponents. You constantly fail, are thwarted at all of your attempts of domination, and still each of you has an army of henchmen. To keep these legions loyal, the Super Villain must give constant speeches to keep up morale and put all fears at ease. Since it is charisma that you possess and power that you seek, perhaps a career in politics could await the retired Super Villain. It is a legitimate, nonviolent rise to power.

There are also respected positions awaiting you evil doctors (Dr. Doom, Dr. Octopus, Dr. Claw, Dr. Strange, etc.). People will no longer scoff at your doctorates. You worked hard for that title and it is about time you got some respect for it. Besides, the medical profession shells out the big bucks. Also you will feel better about yourself, earning your money rather than exploding bank vaults for it.

Many super villains have great, deep, booming voices. There is a job in cartoons, voice overs, death metal, or monster truck rally advertising just waiting for someone with this specific skill to offer his assistance. Aside from this, many film makers will seek you out once they find out that you are not hell bent on the annihilation of the human race anymore. Hollywood's best and brightest want you and your experience to work for them as fictional villains. You can still have the old thrill of being evil but not hurt anyone, gain respect and credibility, and make money at the same time. Also, a Super Villain could apply his agility and shouting skills to the art of professional wrestling, and most already have costumes.

By giving up the world-domination business, you, the Super Villain, will also have

a chance to meet new people, settle down and/or raise a family. This will give you a new found respect for life. You will see that it is far more beautiful to create a life than to destroy one.

If none of these offerings seems appealing to your personal villainous needs, there is also a safety and security that comes along with a respectable life. The police will actually show up at your house when you call them rather than when someone calls them on you. And you won't be received with laughs at 911 when you tell them that your secret lair is on fire.

You will not be endlessly pursued by Super Heroes either. But do not think that you can monopolize the domination business because your evil colleagues drop from the business. This will only mean that you will be severely outnumbered by your enemies. And even if you could destroy them somehow, you would only be creating more enemies. Most of these Super Heroes, such as Batman and The Punisher, base their crusades on vengeance. So most likely, by killing them you will force others, such as family members, friends, and side kicks of the deceased, to seek you out for vengeance. It would just be safe to find a new profession.

Please heed this call, from a former Super Villain to the current Super Villains. Leave this business for the betterment of your health, physical and mental, and for the betterment of the world which you seek to rule. Because if you succeed on your dominant quest you will only be creating a world undesirable to rule anyway. It is a futile effort. You should apply your skills to an array of creative venues. The only world that you should seize should be that of opportunity.

-Tom Grimaldi, II

New Years

Lights
in the darkness
glittering like warm icicles
please the soul
setting up a spotlight
for the child to dance her
last, long, dance
(accompanied with fairy-tale wishes and
chocolate sweet kisses of comfort laid on her forehead)
while the woman secretly
adorns beneath the cover of her teenage face,
ready to emerge
to deepen the laugh and the smile wrinkles,
to displace the ability to curl into small places
and the desire not to be noticed.
The child steals a last bow
and fades into the back
where too-small clothes and too-simple toys lie
loved but neglected
and the woman unbends herself
and emerges
breathless.
The last light is unplugged and life goes on.

-Cara Furman, I



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